Carl Hiaasen
(Writer, Vero Beach; age 62)

> Mostly, we produce construction jobs in Florida — construction for the sake
  of construction. That's basically the same mechanism as a cancer cell.
> I grew up in what's now Plantation. It was literally on the edge of the
  Everglades. I'm sure part of it had at one point been in the Everglades.
  There wasn't a mall, a strip mall, not anything. It had been cow pastures
  and wetlands, so my childhood was spent outdoors. After school, I'd get
  on my bike, go snake hunting or fishing, just hanging out and exploring.
  It was the best possible childhood.

> When you're in journalism, they don't pay you to be mellow.
  They pay you to go out and cover what's happening.
> 'Hoot,' the first book I wrote for kids, was a page right out of
  my own childhood — the little owls and everything. That was
  me growing up in west Broward County. Near where we lived, there
  was a lot of open acreage, and it was purchased by a company that
  was going to build a condominium.
  The next thing we knew there were bulldozers and backhoes, and
  they cleared the land where these little owls lived, these burrowing
  owls, and they just buried them alive. That pissed me off then, and
  it pisses me off today.

> When I start a novel, I have no idea where it's going to end.
  Sometimes, I figure it out sooner. Sometimes, I figure it out later.
  The later I figure it out, the more miserable I am, and my poor family
  has to put up with me walking around in a dark cloud while I'm

Florida has this incredibly welcoming attitude with regards to corruption. This is by far the crookedest place in the United States.

> Right after I finished the golf book, I hurt my back and I had some surgery about two years ago. It hasn't been right ever since. I tried to play nine holes a few months ago and I got through about seven. So, I haven't been playing much golf, but I'd be much worse off if I had to give up fly-fishing.

> Think about my job as a newspaper columnist. Look at Tallahassee. Look at that complete festival of horrors up there. I will never run out of material.

> When people see their newspapers diminish, and they think, well, so, it put some reporters and editors out of work. No, no, it's much worse than that. These are your eyes and ears in the community. If you want to know what's going on in your community, you need journalism.

> The last book I read about Florida that knocked me out of my chair was so good was Karen Russell's 'Swamplandia.' It was a beautiful and brilliant book. You know what I read recently that I didn't read for years? I went back and read the 'Yearling' by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. Wonderful.

> You can go online and see what stories are getting the most hits. If there's a story in the [Miami] Herald tomorrow that says 'Kim Kardashian Grows a Third Ass Cheek' and another story, 'Iran Tests a Nuclear Weapon Next to Israel,' which one do you think is going to get the most hits? Kardashian's ass every time. That's a bitter pill for all of us who believe people gravitate to what's really important.